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The Turing Scheme



Summary

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Summary

Background

The [Erasmus programme](#) was launched in 1987 as an international education exchange with 11 participating member states, including the UK. It has enabled students to study in another European country – or a ‘partner country’ elsewhere in the world – by funding grants and waiving tuition fees. In 2014, the programme became [Erasmus+](#) and expanded to include apprentices, volunteers, staff and youth exchanges, and jobseekers.

The decision to leave the European Union following the 2016 referendum did not necessarily mean the UK had to end its involvement with the Erasmus+ programme. The Government, however, said the terms for continued participation offered by the EU [were not in the interests of the UK taxpayer](#).

In December 2020, the Prime Minister announced the UK would no longer participate in the Erasmus+ programme, and it [would be replaced by the Turing Scheme](#). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations that received Erasmus+ funding for projects in 2014-2020 have until May 2023 to use it.

The new scheme

Schools, colleges, and universities apply for funding for [Turing Scheme](#) projects on behalf of their students. Projects must focus on four main objectives:

- Global Britain
- Levelling up
- Developing key skills
- Value for UK taxpayers

Organisational funding helps to cover the administrative costs of a placement, while grants help to cover the costs incurred by participants. The support available is broadly in line with what was on offer under Erasmus+. There is also additional financial support available to participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 2021/22, the Turing Scheme's budget is £110 million. It will support around [40,000 participants to go on study and work placements](#) in 150 countries and territories. 48% of placements are for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

At the [Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021](#), funding was confirmed for the Turing Scheme for the next three years, including £110 million for the academic year 2022/23.

Responses

The Scottish and Welsh Governments have [expressed disappointment at the decision to leave the Erasmus+ programme](#) and the nature of its replacement.

On 2 February 2022, the Welsh Government launched [Taith](#), an international learning exchange programme to run alongside the Turing Scheme. The Scottish Government has said it will also [develop its own international exchange programme](#). The Irish Government is working on an [arrangement to continue access to Erasmus+](#) for Northern Ireland's higher education students.

Labour has [questioned the financial support available to participants](#). It has also argued the lack of funding to cover tuition fees runs counter to the Government's stated commitment to disadvantaged students.

The education and training sectors expressed disappointment at the Government's decision to leave the Erasmus+ programme, but welcomed the announcement of a replacement scheme.

Commentary

The Government's decision not to fund inward mobilities has prompted [concern there will be a decrease in inbound exchange students](#) and the cultural and economic benefits they bring to the UK.

The scope of the Turing Scheme has been compared unfavourably to that of the Erasmus+ programme, which covered staff development placements, school improvement programmes, youth opportunities, and sport. Concerns have also been raised about the [decision to award the contract to administer the scheme to the outsourcing and professional services company Capita](#).

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its associated travel restrictions may also have implications for projects and placements.

1 Background

1.1 Erasmus+

The Erasmus programme was launched in 1987 as an education exchange with 11 participating member states, including the UK. It has enabled more than four million students to study in another European country by funding grants and waiving tuition fees. In 2014, the programme became [Erasmus+](#) and expanded to include apprentices, jobseekers, volunteers, and staff and youth exchanges. Today, Erasmus+ has 34 full members, including several non-EU nations such as Norway and Iceland, as well as more than 160 partner countries.

Participant countries in Erasmus+

Programme Countries are eligible for all the benefits of Erasmus+. This category includes all full member states of the EU, as well as Norway, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

Partner Countries are eligible for some parts of Erasmus+, subject to specific criteria or conditions being met. This category includes non-EU states on the European continent, such as Albania, and many other countries across the world including Australia, Japan, India, China, Brazil, and Nigeria.

The guide '[Erasmus+: An introduction](#)' provides an overview of the programme's purpose:

Erasmus+ helps people at all stages of their life, from school through to adulthood, to pursue stimulating opportunities for learning and enabling them to gain the valuable life-skills and international experience they need to succeed in today's world.¹

Erasmus+ is run on seven-year cycles. The last cycle in which the UK participated ended in 2020. Although Erasmus+ is funded by the EU, each country involved manages most of the funding decisions through a National Agency. In the UK, the Erasmus+ programme was delivered by the [UK National Agency](#), a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK. The UK National Agency reported to the Department for Education (DfE).

¹ Erasmus+, UK National Agency, and the Department of Education, Erasmus: An Introduction, January 2020. Available at <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/publications>.

In 2018, 18,305 people departed from the UK for study and work placements in Erasmus+ programme and partner countries (the sixth highest of all participating countries).² 30,501 students came to the UK through inward mobilities (the fourth highest).³ When compared to the general student population in 2013-14 (the most recent year for which such data is available), Erasmus+ participants from the UK were:

- more likely to be White;
- around half as likely to be Black and around one-third as likely to be Asian;
- slightly less likely to have a physical or mental disability;
- more likely to be from higher socio-economic backgrounds.⁴

Further information about Erasmus and the UK's participation in the programme is available in the Library briefing [The Erasmus Programme](#).

1.2

Brexit

The UK left the European Union on 31 January 2020. During the post-Brexit transition (or implementation) period, which ended on 31 December 2020, the UK's involvement in Erasmus+ continued as planned. Any funding agreed was honoured, including for future placements due to take place after the end of the transition period.⁵

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, universities, colleges, and schools that received Erasmus+ funding for projects in the 2014-2020 cycle were also given until 2023 to use it.⁶

The decision to leave the EU did not necessarily mean the UK had to leave the Erasmus+ programme, since it could have continued to participate as a programme or partner country. On 15 January 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the House of Commons the UK would remain part of Erasmus+. He said:

There is no threat to the Erasmus scheme, and we will continue to participate in it. UK students will continue to be able to enjoy the benefits of exchanges

² Erasmus+, [Annual report 2019, statistical annex](#), 2020, p34.

³ Erasmus+, [Annual report 2019, statistical annex](#), 2020, p34.

⁴ Erasmus+, [Statistics and results for Erasmus](#), Key statistics charts 2007-2014.

⁵ [PQ 108312](#) [Erasmus+ Programme] 25 October 2017. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, universities, colleges, and schools that received Erasmus+ funding for projects in the 2014-2020 cycle have until May 2023 to use it.

⁶ [“NI universities can spend EU Erasmus scheme money until 2023”](#), BBC News, 4 November 2021 (accessed 1 December 2021).

with our European friends and partners, just as they will be able to continue to come to this country.⁷

According to the Government, the new terms for continued involvement proposed by the EU comprised a participation fee and a GDP-based contribution.⁸ Calculating this would have entailed a net cost in the region of £2 billion over the next seven-year cycle, the Government said they did not believe remaining part of Erasmus+ offered value-for-money for the UK taxpayer.⁹

1.3

The announcement of a new scheme

In December 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the UK would no longer participate in the Erasmus+ programme, and it would be [replaced by the Turing Scheme](#), named after the Mathematician Alan Turing. The Prime Minister said leaving Erasmus had been a “tough decision”, but a new scheme would give students the opportunity “not just to go to European universities, but to go to the best universities in the world.”¹⁰

On 4 February 2021, the Turing Scheme was brought within the scope of the [Student Support Regulations](#), which came into force on 1 March 2021. The regulations changed the definition of “Erasmus year” so students participating in the Turing Scheme were entitled to receive support like students on Erasmus+ placements.¹¹

Intentions for the scheme

A DfE [press release](#) from 26 December 2020 said the Turing Scheme would make over £100 million available to support around 35,000 students and pupils on overseas placements from September 2021.¹²

The Government said the scheme is underpinned by a desire to provide value-for-money for the UK taxpayer and promote social mobility,¹³ with a focus on disadvantaged students.¹⁴ The new scheme would be global, and participation open to students of all subjects and nationalities studying at UK universities, colleges, and schools.¹⁵

⁷ [HC Deb 15 January 2020 c1021](#).

⁸ [PQ 132973](#) [Turing Scheme] 13 January 2021.

⁹ [PQ 133977](#) [Turing Scheme] 15 January 2021.

¹⁰ “[UK students lose Erasmus membership in Brexit deal](#)”, The Guardian, 24 December 2020 (accessed 12 February 2021).

¹¹ The Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, [Explanatory Memoranda](#) p. 6, para 7.12.

¹² DfE Press Release, [New Turing scheme to support thousands of students to study and work abroad](#), 26 December 2020.

¹³ [PQ 133977](#) [Turing Scheme] 15 January 2021.

¹⁴ [HL Deb 5 January 2021 \[Education: Turing Scheme\]. c12](#).

¹⁵ [PQ 143123](#) [Languages: Teachers] 5 February 2021; [PQ 137193](#) [Turing Scheme] 22 January 2021.

Administration and costs

It was announced in January 2021 the scheme would be administered for its first year by the British Council and Ecorys, who together had [previously delivered](#) the Erasmus+ scheme in the UK.¹⁶ The £110 million made available for 2021/22 included the costs of administering the scheme.¹⁷

The Government encouraged UK institutions to maintain and build upon existing relationships with their counterparts, and said they were also promoting the new scheme through government-to-government engagement.¹⁸

The devolved administrations

The Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan, said the [Government had worked closely with the devolved administrations](#) in designing a scheme for students from across the UK.¹⁹ She also said the scheme would be demand-led and open to bids from providers across the UK, with no limits for any specific region.²⁰

¹⁶ [PQ 139112](#) [Turing Scheme] 27 January 2021. From March 2022, Capita will assume responsibility for the scheme for the academic year 2022/23, in partnership with the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

¹⁷ [PQ 132973](#) [Turing Scheme] 13 January 2021.

¹⁸ [PQ 137193](#) [Turing Scheme] 22 January 2021.

¹⁹ [PQ 132856](#) [Turing Scheme] 11 January 2021.

²⁰ [PQ 138012](#); [PQ 138014](#); [PQ 138015](#) [Turing Scheme: Wales] 19 January 2021.

2

How does the Turing Scheme work?

On 12 March 2021, [the Turing Scheme](#) opened for funding applications from schools and further and higher education providers. The Prime Minister said:

The Turing Scheme is a truly global programme with every country in the world eligible to partner with UK universities, schools and colleges.

It is also levelling up in action, as the scheme seeks to help students of all income groups from across the country experience fantastic education opportunities in any country they choose.²¹

The scheme will provide funding for the outward mobility of participants from the UK and British Overseas Territories, with no limits on numbers in respect of category or destination.²²

2.1

Application process

Eligible organisations apply for funding for projects on behalf of their pupils, students, and learners through the Turing Scheme's online application form. The form asks applicants to provide an overview of their project, including the proposed activities, how participants will be chosen, and the budget.

How are applications assessed?

Applications are assessed according to how well a project addresses the four core objectives set out in the [programme guide](#):

- **Global Britain:** Projects should support high quality placements, enhance existing partnerships, and encourage the forging of new relationships.
- **Levelling up:** Projects should support social mobility and widen participation across the UK. They should help and promote equal access and opportunities to all pupils, students, and learners regardless of their background.
- **Developing key skills:** Projects should offer unique, career-building opportunities. They should give participants the hard and soft skills sought by employers and bridge the gap between education and work.

²¹ DfE Press Release, [Turing scheme to open up global study and work opportunities](#), 12 March 2021.

²² Turing Scheme, [Programme Guide](#), p6.

- **Value for UK taxpayers:** Projects should optimise social value in terms of potential costs, benefits, and risks.²³

The design and implementation of the proposed project is also assessed, and financial capacity checks are carried out on applicants. Applications are considered by “external independent sector experts”, who score them out of a possible 100 points. A Project Assessment Board, comprising representatives from the DfE and devolved administrations, then reviews a recommended list of projects to be funded.

More information is available on pages 22 to 28 of the [programme guide](#).

2.2

Eligibility

Higher Education

To take part in HE projects in the new scheme, organisations must be an officially recognised Higher Education Provider (HEP) registered in the UK or a British Overseas Territories. Participants do not need to be UK nationals and can be studying full or part time. Recent graduates within 12 months of graduating are also eligible for the scheme.

HE students can undertake both study and work placements abroad, lasting from four weeks to 12 months. Grants towards the general cost of living will be broadly in line with what was offered by the UK National Agency under Erasmus+. However, unlike the EU programme, not all participants are eligible for support towards the cost of travel under the new scheme.

Further information is available in the [programme guide](#) on pages 9 to 13.

Further Education

To take part in FE and VET projects, organisations must be registered in the UK or a British Overseas Territory and either:

- an FE college or school active in the field of FE and VET;
- a local or regional public authority, coordination body, or other organisation with a role in the field of FE and VET;
- a company or other public or private organisation hosting, training, or otherwise working with learners and apprentices in FE and VET;
- a company or other public or private organisation applying on behalf of a consortium of FE and/or VET providers.

²³ Turing Scheme, [Programme Guide](#), p6.

Participants do not need to be UK nationals but should either be:

- full-time or part-time FE or VET learners (including apprentices);
- recent graduates of a VET provider (within 12 months of graduating);
- an individual not in permanent education or training, but who may be re-training through a college or school;
- persons accompanying FE or VET learners abroad for safeguarding purposes.

Placements can last from two weeks to 12 months and should consist of study or a traineeship at a FE/VET provider or company. Organisations can also send learners to take part in skills competitions abroad lasting between one and 10 days, and five-day mobilities may also be run for participants with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Placements outside of Europe should have a minimum duration of 15 days excluding travel time.

Further information is available in the [programme guide](#) on pages 14 to 18.

Schools

To apply for schools projects, organisations must be registered in the UK or a British Overseas Territory and should either be:

- a school providing general, vocational, or technical education on any level from primary school to upper secondary education;
- a national school consortium applying on behalf of a number of schools.

Schools can send participants on short-term placements of three days to two months. These are for pupils of any age and are accompanied by school staff. Participants should spend most of the time in the classroom working with pupils from a school in another country on activities that support their learning and development.

Pupils over the age of 14 can undertake a long-term placement of two to six months at a partner school in another country. They should attend lessons, live with a host family, and have an immersive experience in the daily life of the receiving school.

Further information is available in the [programme guide](#) on pages 18 to 21.

2.3

Grant rates

For all projects, organisational support will help to cover the costs directly linked to the administration and implementation of a placement. Under each project:

- £315 will be provided per participant for the first 100 participants.
- From the 101st participant onwards, £180 will be provided per participant.

Cost of living

Funding to cover the cost of living is also available for all projects. It is broadly in line with what was offered by the UK National Agency under Erasmus+. The amount will vary depending on the participant, the placement length, and the destination country. For example, students on a HE placement will receive:

- For placements lasting between four and eight weeks:
 - To Group 1 destinations: £545 per month
 - To Group 2 and 3 destinations: £480 per month
- For placements lasting over eight weeks:
 - To Group 1 destinations: £380 per month
 - To Group 2 and 3 destinations: £335 per month

The three groupings of destination countries are set out on the [Turing Scheme website](#).

Travel

Participants on FE, VET, and schools projects will also receive funding towards the cost of travel. The amount will depend on the distance between the home and destination provider and will support the cost of a round trip. Available amounts are set out below:

- 10 to 99km: £20
- 100 to 499km: £165
- 500 to 1,999km: £250
- 2,000 to 2,999km: £325
- 3,000 to 3,999km: £480
- 4,000 to 7,999km: £745
- 8,000 to 12,000km: £905
- 12,000km+: £1,360

Linguistic support

For FE and VET participants, £135 per participant is also available in the form of a grant to cover the cost of linguistic support, including classroom courses and learning materials.

2.4

Widening access

One of the stated objectives of the Turing Scheme is to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups. The Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan, has said the following measures are intended to achieve this goal:

- The assessment criteria of projects will be heavily weighted towards how they support widening access.
- Grant rates will maintain parity with Erasmus+ and existing student finance support. Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds will have their travel-related costs reimbursed.
- The scheme will be actively promoted in geographical areas of disadvantage.
- The minimum higher education duration of outward mobilities has been reduced from a minimum of one term to 4 weeks.²⁴

For the purposes of the scheme, established definitions of ‘disadvantaged groups’ are used, but there will be some discretion where appropriate. The criteria used by the Turing Scheme are available in the [programme guide](#) on pages 39 to 41. Organisations are encouraged to make the case for participants whom they believe should be entitled to extra financial support even if they may not meet the scheme’s definition of disadvantage.

Organisations are also encouraged to note in their bids if they intend to widen access to groups underrepresented in international placements. This includes minority ethnic, part-time, disabled, and mature students, as well as students who are the first in their family to attend university. Students in these groups will not necessarily be entitled to additional grant funding, however.

Financial support for disadvantaged groups

Participants in all projects from ‘defined disadvantaged backgrounds’ will receive actual costs for additional travel expenses, including the costs of visas, passports, and health insurance.

²⁴ [PQ 155341](#) [Turing Scheme] 25 February 2021.

For those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the scheme will also fund up to 100% of actual costs for support directly related to their additional needs. This is in line with what was previously provided by the UK National Agency under Erasmus+, but funding will now also cover preparatory visits to carry out risk assessments and ensure participants can access and take part in all elements of a placement.

Specific support for disadvantaged HE participants

Participants from disadvantaged backgrounds on a HE placement will receive a higher cost of living grant:

- To Group 1 destinations: £490 per month
- To Group 2 and 3 destinations: £445 per month

Unlike other HE participants, funding will also be provided to help cover costs of travel for those from a disadvantaged background. The exact amount will depend on the distance between the home and destination organisation.

Further information is available on the [HE funding page](#).

2.5

2021 funding awards

On 4 August 2021, the DfE announced [40,000 students, pupils, and learners are to pursue study and work placements](#) in over 150 countries and territories from September.²⁵

A total of 412 applications were received from education and training providers from across the UK.²⁶ 363 projects were approved to receive grant funding totalling just over £96 million, with 48% of placements for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Full details of all successful applicants are available on the [Turing Scheme website](#). The Government has said more data on placement durations and locations will be published once the 2021/22 academic year concludes.²⁷

Higher Education

All the 139 HEPs that applied were successful in their bids, with a total of £67 million awarded to facilitate 28,997 placements. 111 of the successful applicants were from England, 17 from Scotland, 7 from Wales, and 4 from

²⁵ DfE press release, [40,000 students to study across the globe as part of new Turing Scheme](#), 4 August 2021.

²⁶ Turing Scheme website, [Funding results](#) (accessed 17 September 2021).

²⁷ [HL5786](#) [Erasmus+ Programme and Turing Scheme] 31 January 2022.

Northern Ireland. Universities in the West Midlands received the most funding.²⁸

English-speaking countries were the most popular destination choice for higher education Turing Scheme projects. 13.49% of all projects are planned for the United States (more than double the next popular country, China), with Canada and Australia also in the top five most popular destinations, along with France.

Further Education

Out of the 142 FE/VET applications, 110 were successful, including 93 from England, 6 from Scotland, 2 from Wales, and 9 from Northern Ireland. Nearly £22 million will facilitate 5,985 placements, 54.8% of which will be for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Following comments from one of the Turing Scheme's delivery partners in March 2021, there had been some expectation that [£35 million had been informally set aside for 10,000 FE/VET placements](#).²⁹ According to the DfE, however, there was less demand from colleges and training providers than anticipated, and greater-than-expected demand from universities when it came to reviewing applications.³⁰

In contrast to the successful HE projects, eight of the top ten most popular destinations were within Europe, and Spain accounted for almost a fifth of all successful applications.

Schools

114 out of 131 schools projects were successful in their application for funding from the new scheme, including 105 schools from England, 5 from Scotland, 4 from Wales, but none from Northern Ireland. Nearly £7.5 million will facilitate placements for 5,049 participants.

France (22.78%) and Spain (17.49%) were the most popular destinations for school projects.

²⁸ [HL5786](#) [Erasmus+ Programme and Turing Scheme] 31 January 2022.

²⁹ [“Colleges and training providers in line for £35m slice of the Turing Scheme”](#), FE Week, 4 March 2021 (accessed 17 March 2021).

³⁰ [“Revealed: The FE providers to win Turing Scheme funding”](#), FE Week, 4 August 2021 (accessed 17 September 2021).

3

Responses to the new scheme

3.1

The devolved administrations

On 26 January 2021, the Scottish and Welsh Governments issued a [joint statement detailing their disappointment](#) with the UK Government's decision to end its participation in the Erasmus+ programme. It said:

The Turing Scheme, funded at £105 million for one year, pales in comparison to Erasmus+, which has now had its budget for the next seven years increased to €26.2 billion. Turing will offer no funding to the international partners that are needed to allow mobilities to take place unlike Erasmus+, where both parties are awarded funding to facilitate the exchange of learners from one country to another. Turing will also fail to support any of the strategic partnerships currently supported by Erasmus+, which help to build relationships with partners in Europe.³¹

The statement said both the Scottish and Welsh Governments will explore how they can continue to enjoy what they see as the benefits offered by Erasmus+. It also called for the UK Government to give any replacement funding for Erasmus+ directly to the devolved administrations.

On 15 February 2021, the EU Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, [ruled out the possibility of Scotland and Wales re-joining Erasmus+](#). She said while the EU had offered the UK full association with the programme in exchange for a financial contribution, association as a constituent nation was not possible.³²

The Scottish and Welsh Governments have since announced they will fund their own mobility schemes to operate alongside the Turing Scheme. Northern Ireland is working on an arrangement with the Irish Government to continue access to Erasmus+ for its higher education students.

Wales

On 21 March 2021, the Welsh Government announced a new international learning exchange programme to run alongside the Turing Scheme. A press

³¹ Scottish and Welsh Governments, [Joint statement on Erasmus+ exchange programme](#), 26 January 2021.

³² [“EU rejects calls to readmit Scotland to Erasmus scheme”](#), Politico, 16 February 2021 (accessed 16 February 2021); [“Brexit: Welsh students' return to Erasmus scheme ruled out”](#), BBC News, 16 February 2021 (accessed 16 February 2021).

release [outlined the rationale for the new programme and highlighted its reciprocity and broader focus](#). It said:

The new programme will fill the gaps Turing leaves, including, crucially, the commitment to long-term funding, the retention of the principle of two-way exchanges and the inclusion of youth work.³³

Cardiff University are developing the new programme, working with an advisory board of stakeholders from across the education and youth sectors.³⁴ The programme will run from 2022 to 2026. £65 million has been allocated for the duration of this period to enable 15,000 participants from Wales to go on overseas mobilities. 10,000 participants will come from overseas to study or work in Wales.

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford, said the intention is to support, as far as possible, [all the activities previously available to Welsh learners under Erasmus+](#). He also said he believed the new programme would support Wales' economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and provide new opportunities to young people.³⁵

Taith

On 2 February 2022, the Welsh Government launched their own international learning exchange programme called Taith, which is Welsh for journey. As promised, [the programme will run from 2022 to 2026](#), and be supported by an investment of £65m from the Welsh Government.³⁶

The programme covers learners and staff from across Wales involved in schools, further and vocational education, higher education, adult education, and youth work. Funding will be made available to organisations operating in these sectors, and these organisations will then invite individuals to apply for exchange opportunities.

Applications for the new scheme open in March and exchanges are due to start in September 2022.

More information is available on the [Taith website](#).

Scotland

Scotland's [2021-22 Programme for Government](#), which was published in September 2021, said, alongside a new strategy for international education,

³³ Welsh Government press release, [New International Learning Exchange programme to make good the loss of Erasmus+](#), 21 March 2021.

³⁴ Welsh Government press release, [New International Learning Exchange programme to make good the loss of Erasmus+](#), 21 March 2021.

³⁵ Welsh Government, [Written Statement: An International Learning Exchange Programme for Wales](#), 22 March 2021.

³⁶ Welsh Government, [Taith: International Learning Exchange Programme](#), 2 February 2022.

the Scottish Government will develop its own international education exchange programme and continue its efforts to re-join Erasmus+:

We will develop a new strategy for international education, to promote Scotland's education offer globally, increase the number of international students, and maintain our links with the EU. We will also develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme to support the international mobility of staff and learners, and work to re-secure Scotland's access to the Erasmus + Programme.”³⁷

The website of the Scottish National Party says the intended Scottish exchange programme will cover [higher education, vocational education and training, school education \(including early childhood education and care\), adult education, youth opportunities, and sport](#).³⁸

Northern Ireland

Under an arrangement being worked out with the Irish Government, students in Northern Ireland will continue to have access to the Erasmus+ programme.³⁹ The Irish Government has said they will introduce a scheme allowing Northern Irish participants to [temporarily register with an Irish Higher Education Institution \(HEI\)](#) in order to undertake an Erasmus+ placement.⁴⁰

In March 2021, the Irish Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science, Simon Harris, said there had been a positive reaction from Northern Irish HEIs to the proposal. He said:

Meetings with all HEIs, north and south to address operational matters have taken place, which will lead to guidelines on the scheme. Further meetings are planned for the coming weeks, with a view to having the scheme in place for the commencement of the 2021/2022 academic year.⁴¹

As of 4 November 2021, it was understood negotiations between Northern Ireland's universities and colleges and the Irish government were still ongoing.⁴²

³⁷ The Scottish Government, [A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22](#), 7 September 2021.

³⁸ SNP, [How are the SNP Scottish Government supporting Higher Education?](#)

³⁹ “[Erasmus: NI students with British passports can access funding](#)”, BBC News, 26 December 2020.

⁴⁰ Irish Government Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, [Further and Higher Education and Brexit](#), 30 December 2021.

⁴¹ “[NI students could be able to avail of Erasmus scheme in September](#)”, Belfast Telegraph, 15 March 2021 (accessed 17 March 2021).

⁴² “[NI universities can spend EU Erasmus scheme money until 2023](#)”, BBC News, 4 November 2021 (accessed 1 December 2021).

3.2

Labour

The Shadow Further Education and Universities Minister, Matt Western, has [questioned the financial support available for those participating](#) in the Turing Scheme in 2021/22, and for the scheme as a whole in the future. He has also argued the lack of funding to cover tuition fees undermines the Government's commitment to disadvantaged students. In response to the announcement of successful projects in August 2021, he said:

The Conservatives' rhetoric on the Turing Scheme does not match the reality. Ministers are claiming to be targeting disadvantaged students, but their scheme provides no support to cover tuition fees which will make accessing this incredible opportunity impossible for many students.

Boris Johnson has yet again created confusion for students and chaos for providers, by breaking his promise to keep the UK in the Erasmus+ programme. Subjecting the Turing Scheme to future spending decisions will create financial uncertainty for organisations and young people. It's being reduced to the status of Erasmus minus.⁴³

3.3

Sector responses

Within the HE sector, disappointment was expressed at the decision to leave the Erasmus+ programme, but the announcement of a replacement scheme was welcomed.⁴⁴

Vivienne Stern, the Director of Universities UK International (UUKi), which represents UK universities on the global stage, has said the Turing Scheme meets a number of her organisation's expectations for a national scheme, particularly in light of current economic pressures.⁴⁵

The scheme has also been welcomed by the Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC), David Hughes, who said it was an "important part of 'levelling up' the life chances for all of our young people - whatever their background."⁴⁶

In an article for the Higher Education Policy Institute, Professor David Carter, head of the International Study and Language Institute at the University of Reading, [posed a number of questions about the new scheme](#), including:

⁴³ Labour press release, [Matt Western responds to Department for Education reports on students who will study abroad under the Turing Scheme from September](#), 4 August 2021.

⁴⁴ Universities UK, "[UUK response on Turing Scheme for students to work and study abroad](#)", 26 December 2020 (accessed 12 February 2021).

⁴⁵ Vivienne Stern, "[Reasons to give the Turing Scheme a chance](#)", Higher Education Policy Institute, 19 January 2021 (accessed 15 February 2021).

⁴⁶ DfE Press Release, [Measures announced to boost international study and global opportunities](#), 6 February 2021.

- whether the budget is really large enough to support the stated aim of worldwide mobility;
- whether organisations may now have to negotiate exchange agreements individually through bilateral contracts;
- what the implications are for modern language learning if a focus on worldwide mobility directs students to English-speaking countries.⁴⁷

3.4

Comment

The announcement of a new exchange scheme to replace the Erasmus+ programme attracted much media comment, including:

- [“The fatal design flaw in UK’s Erasmus-replacing ‘Turing scheme’”](#), The National, 5 January 2021.
- [“Turing Scheme: Erasmus Holds Lessons for Global Britain”](#), Chatham House, 13 January 2021.
- [“Erasmus and the Turing Scheme: A metaphor for Brexit?”](#), The Parliament Magazine, 19 January 2021.
- [“The Turing scheme: a licence to do things better?”](#), University Business, 20 January 2021.
- [“How does the Turing scheme compare to Erasmus?”](#), FE Week, 9 March 2021.

⁴⁷ [“Five questions to ask about the Turing scheme”](#), Higher Education Policy Institute, 11 January 2021 (accessed 15 February 2021).

4

Commentary

Several issues about how the new scheme will work in practice and whether it will be as effective as the Erasmus+ programme have been raised. These include the Government's decision not to fund inward mobilities and tuition fees, the budget and scope of the scheme, the involvement of Capita, and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main differences between the Turing Scheme and the Erasmus+ programme include:

- The Turing Scheme has a focus on global opportunities. While it is possible to undertake an Erasmus+ placement in a 'partner country' from outside Europe, the programme is focussed on European exchanges.
- The Turing Scheme is solely an education and training mobility scheme. Erasmus+ also covers staff development placements, school improvement programmes, youth opportunities, and sport.
- The Turing Scheme only provides for outward mobilities, with no funding available for pupils, students, or trainees wishing to come to the UK.
- The financial support available to participants is broadly similar but differs in some respects. Erasmus+ living cost grants are slightly more generous (especially to 'partner countries' typically outside Europe), but the Turing Scheme provides support for travel-related costs to all higher education participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁴⁸

More detail on some of these differences and their potential impact is provided below.

4.1

Inward mobilities

The Government considered whether to fund students coming to the UK as part of the Turing Scheme, but ultimately decided it would not provide value-

⁴⁸ The Government has also published a blog piece on what it considers the main differences between the two schemes: Department for Education, [What's the difference between the new Turing Scheme and Erasmus?](#), 5 August 2021.

for-money.⁴⁹ This decision has prompted concern there will be a decrease in inbound exchange students and the benefits they bring to the UK.⁵⁰

In an article for the Times from January 2021, Taiwo Owatemi, then-chairwoman of the Erasmus+ All-Party Parliamentary Group, argued the decision not to fund overseas students visiting the UK [undercuts the ambition for a “truly international scheme”](#). She said the lack of reciprocity in the scheme would have both economic and cultural consequences for the UK.⁵¹

Official Data from the DfE revealed the living expenses of incoming Erasmus+ students [amounted to £440 million in 2018](#), which was a 71% increase since 2010.⁵² The House of Lords European Union Committee has set out [a number of the benefits that Erasmus+ participants had brought to the UK](#), including:

- a “global, outward-looking culture” on campuses;
- a higher standard of UK education and training through international collaboration, and the sharing of innovation and best practice;
- “tangible economic benefits” through money spent on courses and in local economies.⁵³

The decision not to fund inward mobilities may also have an impact on the willingness of schools to host pupils from England. An [article in Schools Week from March 2021](#) quoted an external evaluator for the Erasmus+ programme, who said, “if you’re a French school, you’re not going to come here if you’ve got to find the money when you could get funded to go to Germany.”⁵⁴

The Government’s position

The Government has said the decision not to fund inward mobilities was made to ensure value-for-money for the UK taxpayer. They are confident the UK will remain an attractive destination for study and incoming students’ costs will be covered by their own governments or institutions.⁵⁵

As part of its [International Student Strategy](#), the DfE also believes the Turing Scheme will help it meet a target to increase education exports to £35 billion

⁴⁹ [PQ 133977](#) [Turing Scheme] 15 January 2021.

⁵⁰ [“Five questions to ask about the Turing scheme”](#), Higher Education Policy Institute, 11 January 2021 (accessed 15 February 2021).

⁵¹ [“Erasmus replacement does not fulfil promise of a truly international scheme”](#), The Times, 13 January 2021 (accessed 16 February 2021).

⁵² DfE, [UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity in 2018](#), 17 December 2020, Table 2, p. 5.

⁵³ House of Lords European Union Committee, [Brexit: The Erasmus and Horizon programmes](#), 12 February 2019, HL 283, para 35-36.

⁵⁴ [“School trip funding plummets under government’s Turing scheme”](#), Schools Week, 21 March 2021 (accessed 17 September 2021).

⁵⁵ [PQ 133977](#) [Turing Scheme] 15 January 2021; [PQ 167329](#) [Turing Scheme: Educational Exchanges] 16 March 2021.

per year, and host 600,000 international HE students in the UK each year by 2030.⁵⁶

4.2 Tuition fees

The Turing Scheme does not cover tuition fees for UK participants undertaking a study placement abroad. The Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan, has said the Government expects tuition fees to be waived by host institutions for those participating in the new scheme. In response to a Parliamentary Question, she said:

For all students participating in the Turing Scheme, we expect tuition fees to be waived by host institutions, as is typical under Erasmus+ and other exchange programmes. This is a matter for individual institutions to agree, and something that universities do as a matter of course when they form exchange partnerships with international providers.⁵⁷

However, it is unclear how this will work in practice. The Erasmus+ programme is underpinned by the principle of reciprocity. All participating countries contribute financially, and their institutions and students benefit accordingly through inward and outward mobilities. It has also been suggested fee waiver agreements might be hard to agree with European universities, since tuition fees are generally much lower in Europe than the UK.⁵⁸

The Shadow Further Education and Universities Minister, Matt Western, has argued disadvantaged students will face barriers to the new scheme unless tuition fees are waived by host institutions.⁵⁹

4.3 Scope

The scope of the Turing Scheme has been compared unfavourably to the Erasmus+ programme. In addition to educational exchanges, Erasmus+ covered staff development placements, school improvement programmes, youth opportunities, and sport.

⁵⁶ DfE press release, [Measures announced to boost international study and global opportunities](#), 6 February 2021.

⁵⁷ [PQ 167329](#) [Turing Scheme: Educational Exchanges] 16 March 2021.

⁵⁸ “[Doubts raised over UK’s alternative to Erasmus+](#)”, Times Higher Education, 4 January 2021 (accessed 5 October 2021).

⁵⁹ “[Government unveils details of post-Brexit Erasmus replacement](#)”, The New European, 12 March 2021 (accessed 17 March 2021).

In 2020, £4.7 million was available for staff development as part of the UK's Erasmus+ funding.⁶⁰ Lecturers and teachers went on placements to partner institutions across Europe to improve their skills and the teaching provision of their institutions. Under Erasmus+, schools also had access to an [eTwinning platform](#), which allowed them to share learning resources and collaborate on projects with European partners. These provisions are not replicated by the Turing Scheme.

According to the Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donelan, the Turing Scheme is solely an education mobility scheme. International opportunities for young people outside of formal education settings, such as youth groups, are being considered as part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport-led [Youth Review](#).⁶¹

Budget

There have also been questions about the proposed budget, including how it will meet the ambitions of the new scheme, and how the available grants compare to the Erasmus+ programme.

Between 2014 and 2019, for example, Northern Ireland received more than £50 million from the Erasmus+ programme.⁶² This enabled 3,230 students to go on study and work placements or traineeships, and a further 359 school, college, and university staff to go abroad on staff placements. For 2021/22, however, Northern Ireland has been awarded £1.6 million from the Turing Scheme, out of £96 million in funding awarded to schools, colleges and universities across the UK.

An [article](#) on the higher education site Wonkhe has suggested while the Turing Scheme's budget of just over £100 million may be enough for academic year 2021/22, when travel will potentially still be hindered by the impact of Covid-19, "in a post-Covid world, this will be spread thin at best."⁶³

In academic year 2021/22, many education providers are also able to draw on Erasmus+ funding for projects agreed before Brexit, but this will not be the case after March 2023.

At the [Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021](#), funding was confirmed for the continuation of the Turing Scheme for the next three years, including £110

⁶⁰ "[School trip funding plummets under government's Turing scheme](#)", Schools Week, 21 March 2021 (accessed 6 October 2021); "[The Turing Scheme has big boots to fill](#)", FE Week, 22 June 2021 (accessed 6 October 2021).

⁶¹ [PQ 163655 \[Turing Scheme: Youth Services\] 10 March 2021](#). The Youth Review was commissioned at the 2020 Spending Review.

⁶² "[NI universities can spend EU Erasmus scheme money until 2023](#)", BBC News, 4 November 2021 (accessed 9 November 2021).

⁶³ "[Will Turing be a good enough exchange?](#)", Wonkhe, 4 January 2021 (accessed 16 February 2021).

million for the academic year 2022/23.⁶⁴ The Erasmus+ budget for the 2020-27 cycle will be €26 billion, up from €14.7 billion.

Grant amounts

Analysis published by the think tank UK in a Changing Europe argued the grants available under the Turing Scheme are [less generous than for Erasmus+](#), particularly for disadvantaged students. It stated:

Pages nine and ten of the Programme Guide specify a maximum of £490 per month under Turing for disadvantaged students (£380 for others) for a stay of three to twelve months. This compared with €520 (approx £445) under Erasmus+, rising to €720 (approx £630) for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.⁶⁵

It should be noted, however, under the Erasmus+ programme, grant rates are set by the National Agencies but must fall within the minimum and maximum ranges defined by Erasmus+. Since the UK was classed as a group 1 country due to its relatively higher living costs, the maximum grant to which a UK participant would have been entitled in 2020 was €470 per month, rising to €670 for students from a disadvantaged background.⁶⁶

The difference between grant amounts provided by the Erasmus+ programme and the Turing Scheme is most evident for participants going to a 'partner country', which is typically outside Europe. Such students were entitled to €700 per month and additional support for travel expenses in 2020. In comparison, while the Turing Scheme offers travel support for all destinations both within and beyond Europe, only students from disadvantaged backgrounds are eligible.

4.4

The involvement of Capita

Until April 2022, the Turing scheme will be administered by the [British Council](#) (an international organisation sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) and its partner [Ecorys UK](#) (a research consultancy).

Prior to overseeing the Turing Scheme, the British Council had worked on Erasmus+ since 2014, and its predecessor Erasmus since 2007.

Capita

On 8 December 2021, it was reported the outsourcing and professional services company [Capita had been successful in its bid for the nearly £7](#)

⁶⁴ Treasury, [Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021](#), October 2021, p98.

⁶⁵ "[The Turing Scheme: does it pass the test?](#)", UK in a Changing Europe, 12 March 2021 (accessed 16 March 2021). The Erasmus+ figures are taken from the [2020 programme guide](#).

⁶⁶ Erasmus+, [Programme Guide 2020, version 3](#), 25 August 2020, pp46-47.

[million, 23-month contract to administer the scheme](#) for the academic year 2022/23.⁶⁷

Capita will administer the scheme in partnership with the [Association of Commonwealth Universities](#), which will assess applications and support with monitoring and evaluation.⁶⁸ It will also establish an advisory board, which will include organisations from the social mobility, higher education, schools, further education, and vocational training sectors.⁶⁹

The Government has said they are working closely with the British Council, Ecorys, and Capita to transfer existing Turing Scheme projects and “minimise any potential impact to the delivery of the first year of the programme.”⁷⁰

Response

Concerns have been raised by Labour and education unions about Capita’s previous performance when awarded public contracts.⁷¹ The Shadow Further Education and Universities Minister, Matt Western, argued the decision to give the contract to Capita would prove detrimental to student experience. He said:

The Conservatives’ plan to farm out the Turing scheme to the private firm Capita risks selling students short. With the firm’s history of mismanaged contracts, students will clearly fear this government does not have their interests at heart.⁷²

A letter to the Guardian from Roger Iredale, Emeritus Professor of International Education at the University of Manchester and a former British Council officer, argued while there were advantages to seeking competitive pricing for publicly funded Government programmes, savings would come at the expense of the “unbeatable” international network of contacts and experience of the British Council.⁷³

In response to a series of Parliamentary Questions on the issue, the Government said Capita’s bid of £6,271,155 was the lowest of the two compliant bids it received to be the delivery partner for the Turing Scheme.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ “Capita undercuts British Council to run Turing student exchange scheme”, The Guardian, 8 December 2021 (accessed 14 December 2021)

⁶⁸ Capita, [Capita wins contract to administer Turing Scheme which supports students studying and working abroad](#), 9 December 2021.

⁶⁹ Capita, [Capita wins contract to administer Turing Scheme which supports students studying and working abroad](#), 9 December 2021.

⁷⁰ [PQ 114892](#) [Turing Scheme], 31 January 2022.

⁷¹ University and College Union, [Handing Turing Scheme to Capita ‘terrible’ decision, says Jo Grady](#), 8 December 2021.

⁷² “[Outsourcing Turing exchange scheme to Capita ‘risks selling students short’](#)”, The Guardian, 9 December (accessed 14 December 2021).

⁷³ “Privatisation of Turing exchange scheme will affect students”, The Guardian, 13 December 2021 (accessed 14 December 2021).

⁷⁴ [PQ 94480](#) [Turing Scheme], 16 December 2021.

It also said that as with all public contracts, there were “provisions and remedies” to deal with any concerns that may arise.⁷⁵

The decision to award the Turing Scheme contract to Capita was [debated in the House of Lords on 27 January 2022](#).

4.5

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its associated travel restrictions may have implications for projects and placements funded by the Turing Scheme.

Turing Scheme placements are not considered essential travel and so cannot take place in [red list countries](#). Government guidance recommends placements to countries requiring hotel quarantine are rearranged because of the financial burden it would place on participants.⁷⁶ The Turing Scheme will provide some flexibility to delay the start of placements if necessary.⁷⁷

If placements cannot go ahead as planned, the Government has said participants should discuss with their provider what might be possible instead.⁷⁸ It has made clear, however, there is no flexibility for rearranging projects affected by the pandemic to after August 2022. In January 2022, it said:

The funding period for Turing Scheme projects for the 2021/22 academic year ends on 31 August 2022. The Turing Scheme was allocated funding as part of the Spending Review 2020 to be distributed to Turing Scheme beneficiaries for the delivery of mobilities during the 2021/22 academic year. In line with government spending requirements, any government funding must be used within the period that it has been allocated for.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ [PQ 94480 \[Turing Scheme\], 16 December 2021](#).

⁷⁶ GOV.UK, [COVID-19 travel guidance for providers managing education or work placements overseas](#), 26 October 2021.

⁷⁷ GOV.UK, [COVID-19 travel guidance for providers managing education or work placements overseas](#), 26 October 2021.

⁷⁸ [PQ 20435 \[British Students Abroad\], 30 June 2021](#).

⁷⁹ [PQ 111553 \[Turing Scheme\]](#) 25 January 2022.

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